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Viewing cable 09PARIS946, FRENCH SENATE LEADERS ON MIDDLE EAST: YEMEN, PEACE

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g.

#09PARIS946.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09PARIS946	2009-07-13 08:43	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Paris

Appears in these articles:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/state_cables_show_rising_concern_about_al_qaeda_in_yemen/2011/04/07/AFrH6EAD_story.html

VZCZCXRO5450
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR
DE RUEHFR #0946 1940843
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 130843Z JUL 09
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6698
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLZ/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 000946
SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/10/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH SENATE LEADERS ON MIDDLE EAST: YEMEN, PEACE
PROCESS, IRAN OUR TOP PRIORITIES
Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew R. Young for reasons 1.4(B) A
ND (D).

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: After visiting over 250 dignitaries in every country in the Middle East (except Oman), two French Senate Foreign Affairs Committee members stated July 9 that French foreign policy in the Middle East should set three priorities: 1) advance the Israeli-Palestinian peace process; 2) prevent Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons; and 3) thwart the growing influence of extremists in Yemen. Senators Jean Francois-Poncet (former Foreign Minister and UMP member) and Monique Cerisier-ben Guiga (Socialist Party) recommend France begin talking with Hamas, deepen sanctions against Iran, and prevent Yemen from becoming a base for Al Qaeda. While these Senators speak on their own account and have views that differ from GOF positions, they are influential opinion shapers with whom the Embassy will remain engaged as we advocate for U.S. interests. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) In marked contrast to President Sarkozy's interpretation of Iran's nuclear program, Ben Guiga said that France should not view Iran's alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons as posing a security threat because, she argued, "nuclear weapons are primarily a means of dissuasion (rather than aggression)." Instead, she said, France should prevent Iran's development of nuclear capability because such a development would destabilize the region and likely lead Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt to pursue nuclear weapons as well. France must be prepared to tighten sanctions against Iran in close coordination with China and Russia, Ben Guiga asserted. Francois-Poncet agreed with Ben Guiga, noting that if Iran ends its nuclear program, it will be due to US pressure, and that diplomacy toward Iran must include both carrots and sticks.

¶3. (U) Francois-Poncet argued that since resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also critical to regional stability, "Americans and Europeans should talk to all parties, including Hamas, and review the conditions imposed by the Quartet." Hamas, he said, could be part of the peace.

Ben Guiga concurred, asserting that Hamas's origins are as a religious movement, and claiming that not "until recently" has it become more militant. The Senators urged Israel to end the blockade of Gaza and freeze settlements in the West Bank. Ben Guiga called for Marwan Barghouti and Gilad Shalit to be part of a prisoner exchange, saying that Barghouti would be able to bring together Hamas and Fatah. Francois-Poncet acknowledged that the deep divide between Hamas and Fatah will not be overcome soon, but stated that their reconciliation was critical to achieving a lasting political solution.

14. (U) Finally, the Senators urged the international community to "save Yemen so that it does not become the next base for Al Qaeda." Although it is not yet a failed state, the Senators argued, Yemen, a country of 22 million people, is in the process of becoming one. The Senators will publish the full report of their findings and recommendations in September and will host a colloquium on the subject in January 2010.

15. (C) COMMENT: While these Senators speak on their own account and have views that differ from GOF positions, their extensive recent tour of the Middle East provides these two Senators credibility with which to influence their fellow Senators and Deputies, as well as public opinion. Notably, several of their positions conflict with stated GOF policy: their implied belief that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons to "dissuade attack" rather than to project power; their call for Marwan Barghouti and Gilad Shalit to form part of an Israel-Hamas prisoner exchange; and their recommendation that the USG and EU talk to Hamas and amend the Quartet conditions. Post will continue to engage with these opinion shapers to advance U.S. interests in these areas. END COMMENT.

PEKALA